

Present

Bilal Ansari, Charles Bonenti, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Cathy Yamamoto (chair)

Also present: Robin Lenz (Higher Ground coordinator)

Susan Puddester (Higher Ground case management supervisor)

Jaime Bairstow (Willinet)

Business

1. Robin Lenz and Susan Puddester opened the meeting, marking the one-year anniversary of Irene with an overview of the work done in the past year and providing a tribute both to the community that was damaged and to the community that was created in response.

a. 153 homes were permanently lost; 65 remain in use, though of course still on the flood plain.

b. The community response to the devastation made Spruces residents "feel that they are a part of the whole Williamstown community," which the community should never have let them doubt.

2. The minutes of the August 16 meeting were approved.

3. Government representatives' visits

a. USDA state director Jay Healy and colleagues will be in town September 19. The USDA funded the 22 Spring Meadow apartments, which were developed and are owned and operated by Scarafoni Associates.

b. Director of the Massachusetts Housing and Community Development agency Aaron Gornstein attended the event Saturday (August 25) to mark the Spruces flood's one-year anniversary. The HCD provided half of the funds (the town provided the other half) for analysis of the 59 Water St site and could be a source of funding for remediation/clean-up.

4. Sites

a. 59 Water St. The committee voted 4-0-1 to request that the selectmen continue with the next steps in evaluating this site for housing. We guess that they would be determining exactly what is needed to excavate and remediate the small (but unknown) contamination that remains at the site and determining exactly what constraints on development would be imposed by the sewer/water issues.

b. No news on Photec

c. David Traggoth of Mitchell Properties, owner of Cable Mills, told Charles that the Department of Housing and Community Development reaffirmed interest in the project, but that banks are not lending for condos in rural areas, and the Williamstown market is flush with houses for sale. If the project continues as originally envisioned, 12 of 60 units would be affordable.

5. Development consultant solicitation

Cathy and Cheryl will take the multiple drafts and models from other towns and integrate them into a single document to be sent out later in the week to the approximately dozen development consultants that Charles included in his directory.

5. Other committees

a. Affordable Housing Trust will have its first meeting September 5, after the declaration of trust is filed with the Register of Deeds. The state attorney-general approved the trust.

b. Conservation Commission meets September 13. Van and Cathy believe that it is aware that we are interested in moving part of the Lowry property out of conservation, but will not be ready to consider that actively until it becomes clearer what is happening with the current Spruces property.

c. Chief Pederchini of the fire department is aware that we have concerns about the possible razing of low-cost housing if the fire department proceeds with construction on what is now the Lehovec property.

6. Prospective committee business

a. Any town resident, including Williams students, may ask to join the committee by filling out a citizen activity form at town hall. They do so at their own risk.

b. Cathy will collect and distribute any replies to our solicitation that do arrive, so that we may go over them at our next meeting.

Documents referred to: draft consultant-solicitation letter (by Charles, by Cheryl, from Acton, from Amherst), list of development consultants in the area.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 2, 7:00 pm, Town Hall